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PROCEEDINGS
AND MEMORIAL OF A
CONFERENCE
OF
Confederate Roster
Commissioners
AT
ATLANTA, GEORGIA
JULY 20-21, 1903

ALABAMA PRINTING CO.
MONTGOMERY
1903

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

This pamphlet has been compiled and issued by the Secretary in accordance with the wishes of the conference. Pending its publication the chairman, Hon. Allen D. Candler, has been actively engaged in the performance of the duties assigned him. There can be no doubt that the conference has been productive of very valuable results in stimulating the public mind, and in calling attention to the importance of the compilation.

In accordance with the provisions of the seventh paragraph of the proceedings of the second day (June 21st), a copy of the memorial to the Secretary of War was sent by Gov. Candler to the Compiler of Confederate Records, or in states in which no official has been designated, to the Governor of the state, suggesting that if the memorial and its object met with his approval he sign the copy sent him. In response to this suggestion the memorial was signed by Col. S. H. Nowlin, Compiler of Military Records for Arkansas, Hon. John A. Hulin, Adjutant-General of Texas, Hon. H. H. Hannah, Adjutant-General of Tennessee, Governor A. H. Montague of Virginia, and Governor A. M. Dockery of Missouri. In the last two states, no other officer having been named to co-operate with General Ainsworth in the work, the Governors patriotically consented to assume the onerous duty, and Governor Montague has arranged to meet with the representatives of Georgia and North Carolina in Washington at an early date, for the purpose of presenting the memorial to the Secretary of War, and urging that the prayer of the memorialists be granted.

Governor Jennings of Florida replied that no one had been appointed in Florida, but that a little later action would be taken.

Governor Beckham of Kentucky, designated Capt. Ed. Porter Thompson as Compiler of Confederate Records. Upon his death the Governor named Ed. Porter Thompson, Jr. No response has been received from him.

Doubtless, however, the representatives of these states who have not been heard from will join in the memorial.

It is incumbent on all patriotic citizens to render the commissioner for their respective states prompt and active assistance in this noble enterprise.

COMMISSIONERS.

ALABAMA.—Thomas M. Owen, Montgomery.

ARKANSAS.—S. H. Nowlin, Little Rock.

FLORIDA.—

GEORGIA.—Allen D. Candler, Atlanta.

INDIAN TERRITORY.—

KENTUCKY.—Ed. Porter Thompson, Jr., Frankfort.

LOUISIANA.—Gen. Leon Jastremski, Baton Rouge.

MARYLAND.—

MISSISSIPPI.—Dunbar Rowland, Jackson.

MISSOURI.—Gov. A. M. Dockery, Jefferson City.

NORTH CAROLINA.—Dr. B. F. Dixon, Raleigh.

SOUTH CAROLINA.—M. P. Tribble, Columbia.

TENNESSEE.—Harvey H. Hannah, Nashville.

TEXAS.—John A. Hulin, Austin.

VIRGINIA.—Gov. A. H. Montague, Richmond.

WEST VIRGINIA.—A. S. Hutson, Charleston.

1. PROCEEDINGS.

JUNE 20, 1903.

At ten o'clock a. m., the following gentlemen representing their respective States, viz: Gov. Allen D. Candler, Compiler of State Records, Atlanta, Ga., Hon. B. F. Dixon, State Auditor, Raleigh, N. C., Hon. M. P. Tribble, Confederate Roster Commissioner, Columbia, S. C., Gen. Leon Jastremski, Private Secretary to the Governor, Baton Rouge, La., and Thomas M. Owen, Director of the Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Ala., met in the State Library, Atlanta, Ga., in obedience and response to the following call:

To all Compilers of Confederate Rosters:

The officers designated by the Governors of Southern States to co-operate with General Ainsworth, Chief of Record and Pension Office, in securing complete rosters of the officers and enlisted men of the Union and Confederate armies, in the war between the States, are invited to meet in the State Library in the city of Atlanta, at ten o'clock, on Monday, the 20th of July, for the purpose of conferring and agreeing on some uniform plan of procedure in the prosecution of their work. The most absolute accuracy possible in the compilation and publication of these rosters is desirable, to the end that no injustice be done any soldier of the South. The name, and a brief military history, of every officer and man who was in the Confederate army or navy should appear in these rosters to be published by the Secretary of War at Washington, and the name of every impostor should be excluded.

Owing to the loss or destruction of many of the original rosters, during the progress and since the close of the war, our task is difficult, and unless extraordinary effort is made to establish correct copies of lost rolls, and to perfect imperfect ones now in existence, the publication to be made will possess but little value, and will do injustice to many gallant soldiers. Hence the undersigned, designated by the Governors of their respective States to co-operate with General Ainsworth in his important work, realizing the importance of concert of

action, to the end that satisfactory results may be reached, earnestly invite their co-workers in the other Southern States to meet for conference and interchange of ideas, at the time and place named above.

B. F. DIXON,

State Auditor of North Carolina.

THOMAS M. OWEN,

Director Department Archives and History, Ala.

ALLEN D. CANDLER,

Compiler of State Records, Georgia.

Gov. Candler briefly explained the proposed objects of the Conference, and suggested a postponement of formal organization until the next morning at 9 o'clock. He expressed the belief that other commissioners might arrive, and he read a telegram from Hon. Dunbar Rowland, of Mississippi, in which he stated that he would reach the city in time for the second day's session. The postponement was agreed to, after which there was a full and general discussion of the character of the work committed to the commissioners, its difficulties, possible remedies, etc., etc.

Mr. Owen was asked to prepare a statement or memorial, embodying in a formal way the views of the conference, to be submitted at the next session.

JUNE 21, 1903.

The second day's session of the Confederate Roster Commissioners convened at 9:30 o'clock a. m., in the Historical Room of the State Library. There were present: Messrs. Candler, Dixon, Tribble, Jastremski and Owen, and also Hon. Dunbar Rowland, the Director of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

Gov. Allen D. Candler and Thomas M. Owen were elected chairman and secretary respectively.

Mr. Owen then read the memorial which he had prepared in accordance with previous request. After it was presented Mr. Rowland was called for and gave at

length his views on the work imposed on the commissioners. An earnest and general discussion followed in which each commissioner took part.

John W. Lindsey, State Pension Commissioner of Georgia, was then introduced and participated in the discussions.

On motion of Gen. Jastremski the memorial as read was unanimously adopted. (Printed in full hereinafter.)

Mr. Rowland submitted certain resolutions, which were read by him, and on motion they were unanimously adopted. (Printed in full hereinafter.)

On motion, Gov. Candler, the chairman of the conference, was appointed a committee of one to secure the signatures of all Confederate commissioners to the memorial, not only of those participating in the conference, but also those of States not represented.

On motion a committee of three was appointed to consist of Gov. A. D. Candler, *chairman*, Dr. B. F. Dixon, and the commissioner from Virginia, to call on the Secretary of War and formally present the memorial of the conference.

The members of the conference here entered upon a review and discussion of all points of interest involved in the work of the proposed compilation.

Attention was directed to the fact that the State of Arkansas had not as yet appointed a commissioner, and on motion the chairman was directed to urge the Governor of Arkansas to appoint such a commissioner and to otherwise co-operate with the War Department in the premises.

The secretary was requested to prepare the proceedings of the conference in pamphlet form for the use of the commissioners, to be accompanied by such pertinent documents as to him were important.

A rising vote of thanks was then tendered Gov. Candler for his courtesy as chairman and as host, after

which the Conference adjourned *sine die*. Immediately after adjournment, the commissioners called in a body on Gov. J. M. Terrell, who expressed the keenest interest in the proceedings. The two houses of the Legislature were then visited, and the commissioners had the opportunity of meeting several of the distinguished members of those bodies.

ALLEN D. CANDLER,
Chairman.

THOMAS M. OWEN,
Secretary.

II. MEMORIAL.

To the Hon. Secretary of War Elihu Root:

SIR—Your memorialists, duly and regularly appointed to act for their respective States in the compilation of the rosters of the Union and Confederate armies, authorized by Act of Congress, February 25, 1903, respectfully represent that immediately following their appointment they entered upon the duties required of them, and have diligently labored to render to the War Department all possible assistance.

They had not proceeded far, however, in an effort to perform their part of the work before they realized, under the construction of the statute governing the compilation, as interpreted by Gen. F. C. Ainsworth, the officer of your Department having the work immediately in charge, that so far as the Confederate troops were concerned, anything like even an approximately complete or perfect roster could not be made.

The history of Confederate records is doubtless familiar to you. During the progress of hostilities, and since the close of the war, the official records of the Confederate States Government as well as the records of the several Southern States, were subjected to depredations, and in many cases destruction. Many of these records were captured during the war, and fortunately some of them so taken are preserved in your Department, but in other cases the most valuable records were burned. In other cases these records were concealed, and before being brought from their hiding places had suffered in many ways. The result is that no Southern State has a complete body of the records of its soldiers, and in no case are these records complete even where supplemented by the records on file in the War Department. Such being the condition of the Southern States with reference to their records, it is absolutely impossible under the rules laid down by Gen. Ainsworth, above mentioned, to compile the rosters of Confederate soldiers with accuracy and fulness. Inevitably, therefore,

grave injustice will be done the South, and the memory of many a gallant and meritorious soldier.

It is conceded that the best records only should be used in the proposed compilation, but it is urged in this connection that the best should have reference to such as are obtainable. In the event that no roster is found to be in existence in any given case it is insisted that a substitute should be allowed. In permitting this course, under appropriate restrictions, no new principle would be invoked, only the well established and universal doctrine that where a record or document has been lost it may be substituted in the proper way, or that the best obtainable evidence in a given case shall be admitted. Your memorialists are well aware that some abuses would occur, but it is believed that rules can be formulated whereby excellent and satisfactory results can be obtained.

It is further submitted that the Confederate pension records of the several States should be used in the compilation. So far from being secondary in point of evidence, these records are in fact a part of the formal archives and records of each State, and, as such import verity; they are not, therefore, to be classed as ordinary compiled records.

It is further found by your memorialists that their work progresses very slowly even when it is most persistently pushed, and notwithstanding they are using their utmost endeavor they are here unable to indicate how soon they can complete the work.

Realizing the very great importance of the work in hand, and to the end therefore, that a better, more perfect and complete record may be compiled, and in order that full and ample justice be done the several States of the South and the Confederate soldiers, as well as the Union soldiers and the descendants of the men in both armies, and that no criticism may be hereafter urged against the War Department, or against any one connected with the work of the compilation, we most earnestly and respectfully urge and pray:

(1) That there should be no undue haste in publishing the proposed compilation, but that all the time necessary be given the States to complete their rosters as far as possible before they are placed in permanent form.

(2) That prior to final publication, the representatives of the several States be given an opportunity of examining the proof sheets of the compilation for the purpose of correcting errors in names, dates and facts therein, and that they be also allowed to suggest corrections or alterations, to be embodied, either as foot notes or in some other appropriate way, in the roster when published.

(3) That each State may be permitted to submit to your department its Confederate pension records for use in the said compilation.

(4) That your department as soon as practicable supply to the duly appointed commissioner from each State, who may apply therefor, and upon the payment of lawful fees for transcription, a check list of the rosters or rolls of the commands from said State, in order that the said commissioners may more intelligently direct their labors towards supplying deficiencies. This list need show nothing except a mere statement of the regiments, battalions, or other commands, with the rolls, and the date of each that may be on file.

(5) That in the said compilation the detailed record of each soldier be given as far as possible. And, finally,

(6) That in each and every case where no roster of a command is to be found, or where only an imperfect or incomplete roster is preserved, you will admit for the purpose of said compilation a compiled roster certified by the Governor of the State offering the same as carefully, accurately and correctly made up, and as being the only available record of said command discovered and known to him, after diligent search on the part of the commissioner or other representative of the State charged with making search for the same.

Your memorialists, representing in an official way their several States, and after careful and mature deliberation and consultation together respectfully prefer the above petition. Early attention is asked, and you are requested to reply to the several commissioners to their addresses as indicated below. And your memorialists will ever pray, etc.

III. RESOLUTIONS.

Whereas, At the second session of the fifty-seventh Congress a provision was inserted in H. R. 16021, an act making appropriation for the legislative, executive and judicial expenses of the government, making special provision for the compilation and publication, under the direction of the Secretary of War, of valuable historical data relative to both Union and Confederate soldiers, in the following words, to-wit:

“Provided, That under the direction of the Secretary of War, the Chief of the Record and Pension Office shall compile from such official records as are in the possession of the United States, and from such other authentic records as may be obtained by loan from the various States and other official sources, a complete roster of the officers and enlisted men of the Union and Confederate armies.”

Whereas, In order that the proposed roster of the Confederate soldiers shall be historically true, the Governors of the various Southern States have appointed commissioners for the collection of official rosters and other material which may be of value for the use of the war department, be it

Resolved, (1) That the commissioners of the Southern States, in conference at Atlanta, Ga., recognize in the publication or a complete roster of officers and enlisted men, by the national government, of both Union and Confederate armies, a just and patriotic appreciation of the heroism of the American soldier.

Resolved, (2) That we hereby indorse the wise and beautiful conception of preserving in the same record the evidence of the gallantry of those who wore the blue and of those who wore the gray as a common heritage of a great country.

Resolved, (3) That we urge upon Confederate veterans everywhere the importance of making every effort to assist the commissioners of the Southern States in their praiseworthy work of collecting rosters, in order that a complete and accurate record may be compiled.

Resolved, (4) That we extend to Secretary of War Elihu Root and to Gen. F. C. Ainsworth, chief of the record and pension division of the War Department, sincere thanks for their efforts in bringing about the passage of the bill for the publication of the roster.

IV. Communications from the War Department in Reference to the Proposed Compilation of Rosters.

Secretary Root to the Governors of the Several States.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
WASHINGTON, March 16, 1903.

SIR: There is a very general desire on the part of the surviving participants of the great struggle in which the country was engaged from 1861 to 1865, and on the part of the descendants of those who have passed away, for a publication that shall be accessible to the general public and shall show the names of those who, either as officers or enlisted men, bore arms for the Union or for the Confederacy during the great war. In the opinion that this desire is one that should be gratified, and that can be gratified, in great measure at least, by compiling and publishing, as a continuation of the publication known as the "Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies," a complete list or roster of the officers and men who served in those armies during the civil war, this Department recommended at the last session of Congress the enactment of a law authorizing the compilation and preparation of such a roster for publication. That recommendation was followed by the enactment of a provision of law, which is embodied in the Legislative, Executive and Judicial Appropriation Act approved February 25, 1903, and which is as follows:

"That under the direction of the Secretary of War the Chief of the Record and Pension Office shall compile, from such official records as are in the possession of the United States and from such other authentic records as may be obtained by loan from the various States and other official sources, a complete roster of the officers and enlisted men of the Union and Confederate armies."

The Department is prepared to enter at once upon the work of making the compilation thus authorized, and to push it to completion as rapidly as possible. There will be little or no difficulty in making the Union part of the roster complete, but there will be great difficulty with regard to the Confederate partly because of the incompleteness of the collection of Confederate records in the possession of this Department. It is of the first importance, therefore, that no effort shall be spared to secure the temporary loan to the War Department, for the purpose of copying, of any and all authentic Confederate records that can be found anywhere. Many of these records are in the possession of the various States and it is hoped will be made readily accessible, but there are others that are widely scattered among historical and memorial associations and private citizens. The problem of how to find and procure the loan of these scattered records is a difficult one, but is one that must be solved in order that the Confederate soldier shall receive the full credit that is due him in the roster that is to be compiled.

I earnestly invite your co-operation with the Department in an effort to make this compilation as nearly complete as it is possible to make it, and I shall be glad to have the benefit of any suggestions that you can make as to the manner in which that end can be best attained. The work will be in the immediate charge of Brigadier-General F. C. Ainsworth, Chief of the Record and Pension Office of this Department, and I beg leave to suggest that, if the plan herein outlined meets your approval, you designate some official of your State to communicate with him relative to the details of the work and the steps to be taken in the furtherance of it.

Very respectfully,

(Signed)

ELIHU ROOT,
Secretary of War.

Gen. F. C. Ainsworth to the Commissioner for
Alabama.*

RECORD AND PENSION OFFICE,
WAR DEPARTMENT,
WASHINGTON CITY, March 30, 1903.

DEAR SIR: I am gratified to learn, through a letter from Governor Wm. D. Jelks to the Secretary of War, dated March 28, 1903, that you have been designated to co-operate with the Department in the effort to make the recently authorized roster of the officers and men of the Union and Confederate Armies as nearly complete as it is possible to make it, so far as Alabama troops are concerned.

A considerable collection of the rolls of Alabama Confederate organizations is now in the possession of this Department. While that collection does not by any means show all the names of the officers and men who were in the Confederate service from Alabama, and while it does not show the complete military histories of those whose names it does show, it is hoped that the list of names and the histories of individual officers and men can be made much more nearly complete by record evidence obtainable from other original rolls that may now be in the possession of the State of Alabama, or of historical societies, memorial associations and individuals of Alabama and other States.

The legislation authorizing the compilation of the roster is construed by the Department to restrict it, in making the compilation, to the use of *original* records made during the war period, and to preclude the use of printed or manuscript copies or compilations made subsequently. For this reason, and in order that there shall be no ground for doubt as to the accuracy of the proposed roster, the Department will be unable to use in the compilation any of the rosters that have heretofore been published, but must in all cases seek the original records upon which those rosters were based.

*A similar note was addressed each of the Commissioners of the other States.

You will readily see that, in order that the compilation now in progress shall be as nearly complete as it is possible to make it, it is essential that the War Department shall obtain the temporary loan, for the purpose of copying, of any original official rolls, lists or other documents that show the names of Confederate officers and men and that are now in the custody of State officials, historical or memorial associations, public or private libraries, or that are in the possession of private citizens.

It is impracticable for the War Department to communicate with the various holders of these scattered records, and consequently the Department must rely upon each State to collect, by loan or otherwise, such records of its own or other Confederate organizations as may be obtainable within the State, and to forward the collection when completed to this Department, by which the records will be copied and returned to the State with the least possible delay. Of course, the express charges incident to shipping records to and from the State will be defrayed by the Department.

Permit me to suggest, if the plan herein outlined meets with your approval, that you take such steps, through the public press and otherwise, as you may deem to be advisable and proper to give the plan wide publicity, and to enable you to gather together all original Confederate records that can be collected in your State by loan or otherwise.

If it occurs to you that a different plan from that indicated herein should be adopted, or if during the progress of the work you can make any suggestion tending to facilitate or improve it, you will confer a favor upon the Department and myself by advising me freely and fully with regard to your views.

Very respectfully,

(Signed)

F. C. AINSWORTH,
Brigadier-General, U. S. A.,
Chief Record and Pension Office.

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